

The four northern Channel Islands parallel the coast on an east-west axis for 55 miles

Following the Santa Monicas as they march out to sea



Landmark arch just east of Anacapa is visible in clear weather from coast 11 miles away. Here its 50-foot-high opening frames schooner-rigged clipper Swift of Ipswich

Traveling the length of the Santa Monica Mountains may well be the most adventuresome journey in Southern California, for that range begins in the heart of Los Angeles but has a seaward projection that continues about 120 miles to the west. This eight-page report deals with the seaward part of the range; its top rises above the Pacific to form the northern four of the eight Channel Islands.

These islands tantalize the land-bound observer — on clear days — from Point Mugu to Point Conception and beyond. Their teeming waters draw fishermen, lobster trappers, abalone divers, researchers studying submarine gardens. Yachtsmen seek shelter in their coves; biologists are attracted by their unusual wildlife.

The islands' history begins with Cabrillo. Their prehistory dates North American man as a contemporary of the Pleistocene mammoth, 30,000 years ago. Their natural history makes them a kind of Galápagos of California, on which 80 plants and several animals have evolved as different from their mainland relatives.

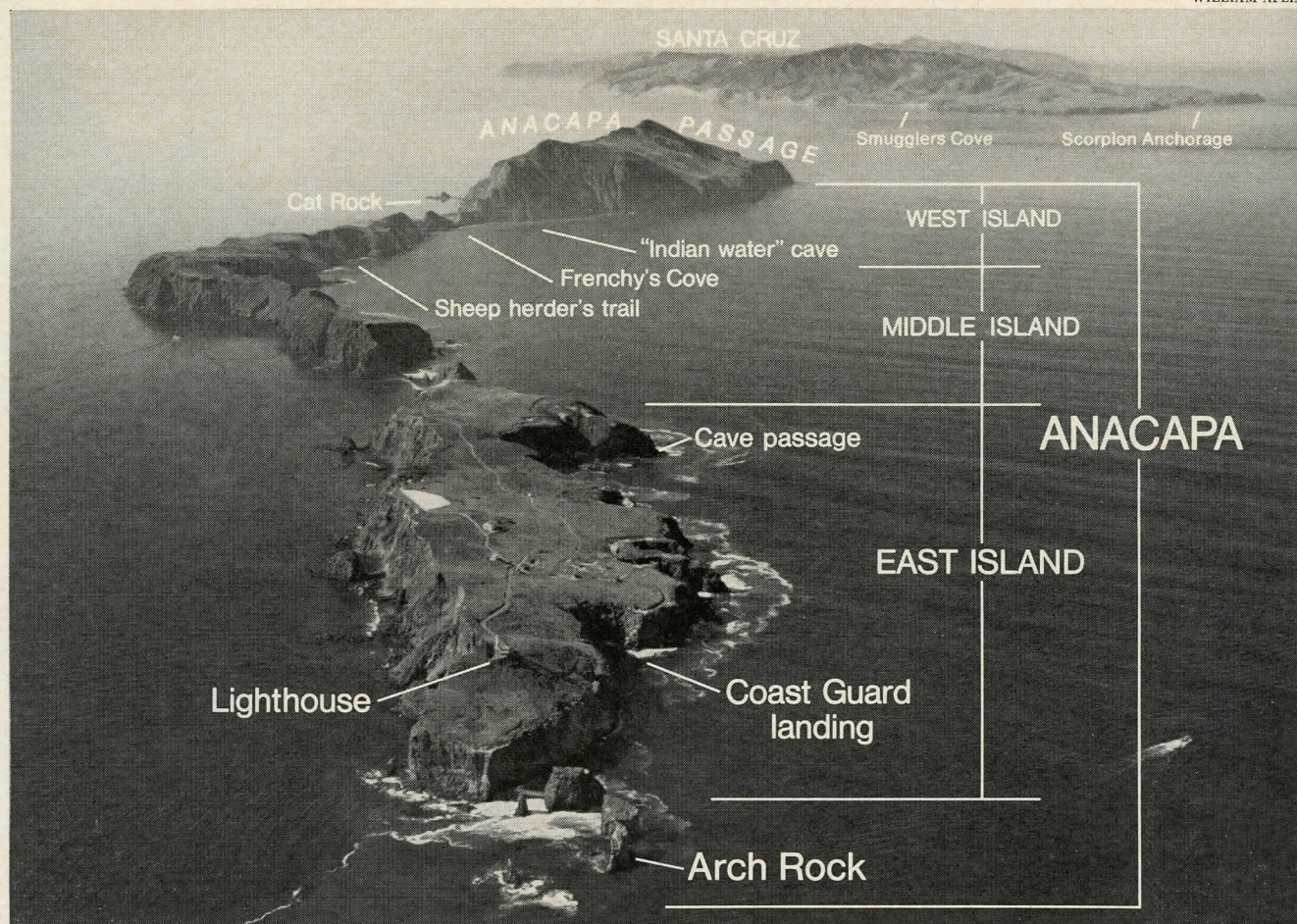
Turn the page for a report on the islands today — and how to visit them.



Rowing ashore to a Santa Cruz beach

APRIL 1967

GLENN CHRISTIANSEN
In calm of Coches Prietos anchorage, south coast of Santa Cruz, dinghy makes for sand beach. In foreground, creek forms tiny fresh-water lagoon



Looking west: Each one of Anacapa's three islands is successively higher and longer. Santa Cruz occupies horizon 4 miles beyond

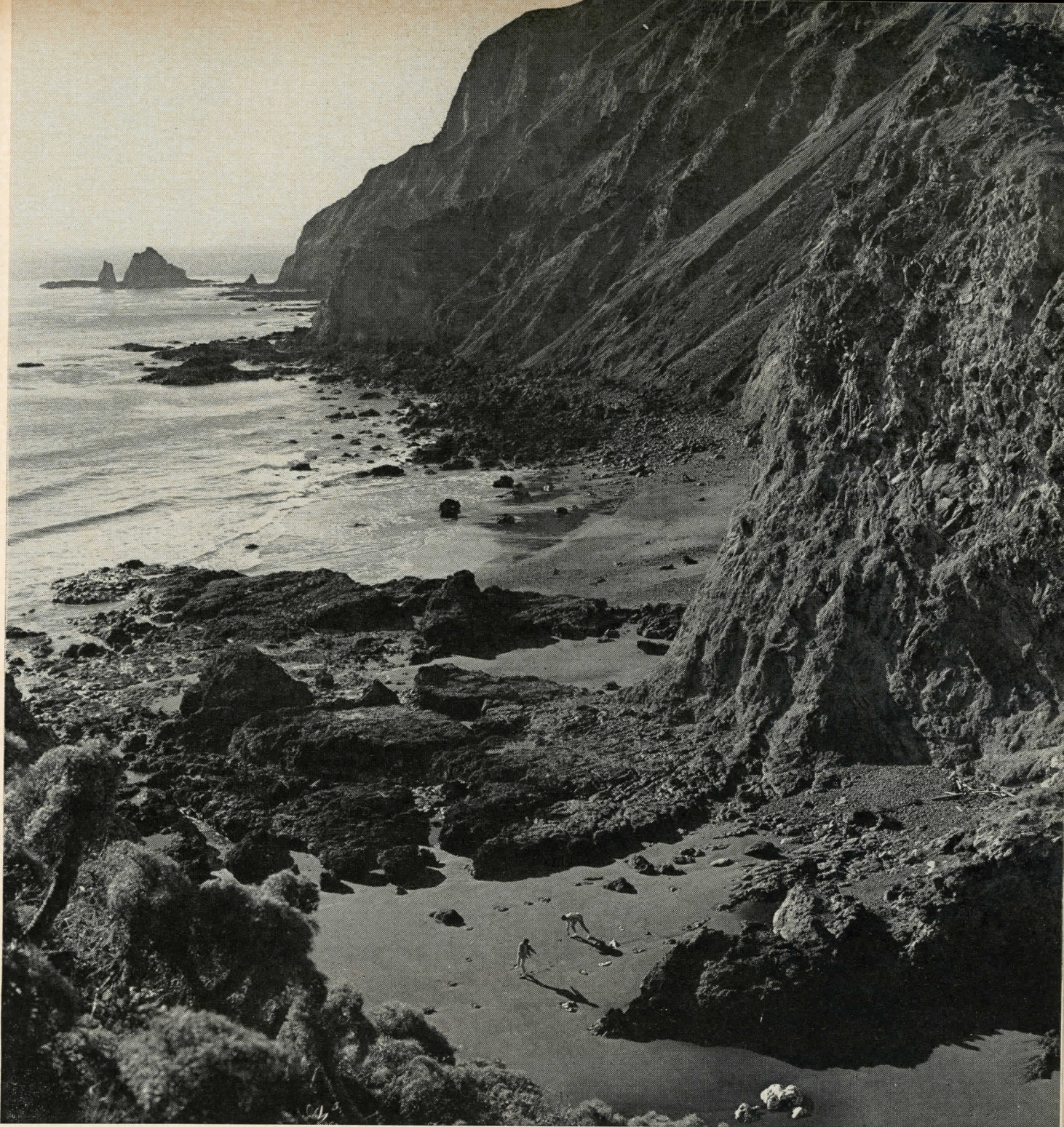
The three Anacapas make a rocky chain

Anacapa, the only island on which you may land without special permission, is the smallest and nearest to the coast. Already proclaimed (along with Santa Barbara Island to the southeast) as a national monument, it affords a sampling of some of the attractions of the larger islands to the west.

(This spring bills will be introduced into Congress to make the present monument and Anacapa's three neighbors a national park—Southern California's first national park.)

One of the best reasons for an April visit is the wildflower display. The show is dominated by the splashes of yellow, visible from far at sea, painted by an endemic plant so striking it could be called the islands' trademark: the giant coreopsis (*Coreopsis gigantea*). This curious plant is an ungainly, thick-trunked perennial that often reaches 6 feet in height, sometimes 8 feet. Most of the year its branches end in dry brown tufts of withered flowers and foliage. In spring they sprout

Anacapa Light, 277 feet high, is visible 24 miles. Foghorn is next to it. From here, island seems cut in half, with only a north slope



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Low tide uncovers a sandy beach and tide pools on the south shore of the west island of Anacapa. Offshore stack is Cat Rock

feathery green leaves and clumps of light yellow blossoms.

By April, chances of rain and of the blustering *santa ana* winds from the northeast that follow a frontal storm have usually lessened. The likelihood of fog is somewhat less than in summer, and you can usually expect a fairly calm crossing at least before noon; prevailing winds that freshen after noon end the smoothness of the sea. And you should be forewarned that the surf may be too heavy for a safe dinghy landing. There are no public docking or other facilities on any of the islands.

As you close in on Anacapa, it first looks romantic with the distant charm of any landfall, then austere for lack of trees, then fascinating when you get near enough to see clearly its caves, coves, and cliffs. If your vessel carries a skiff, the landing place is a bight just west of the break between the middle

and west islands. Take along sneakers and be prepared to jump into a foot or two of water to make the landing.

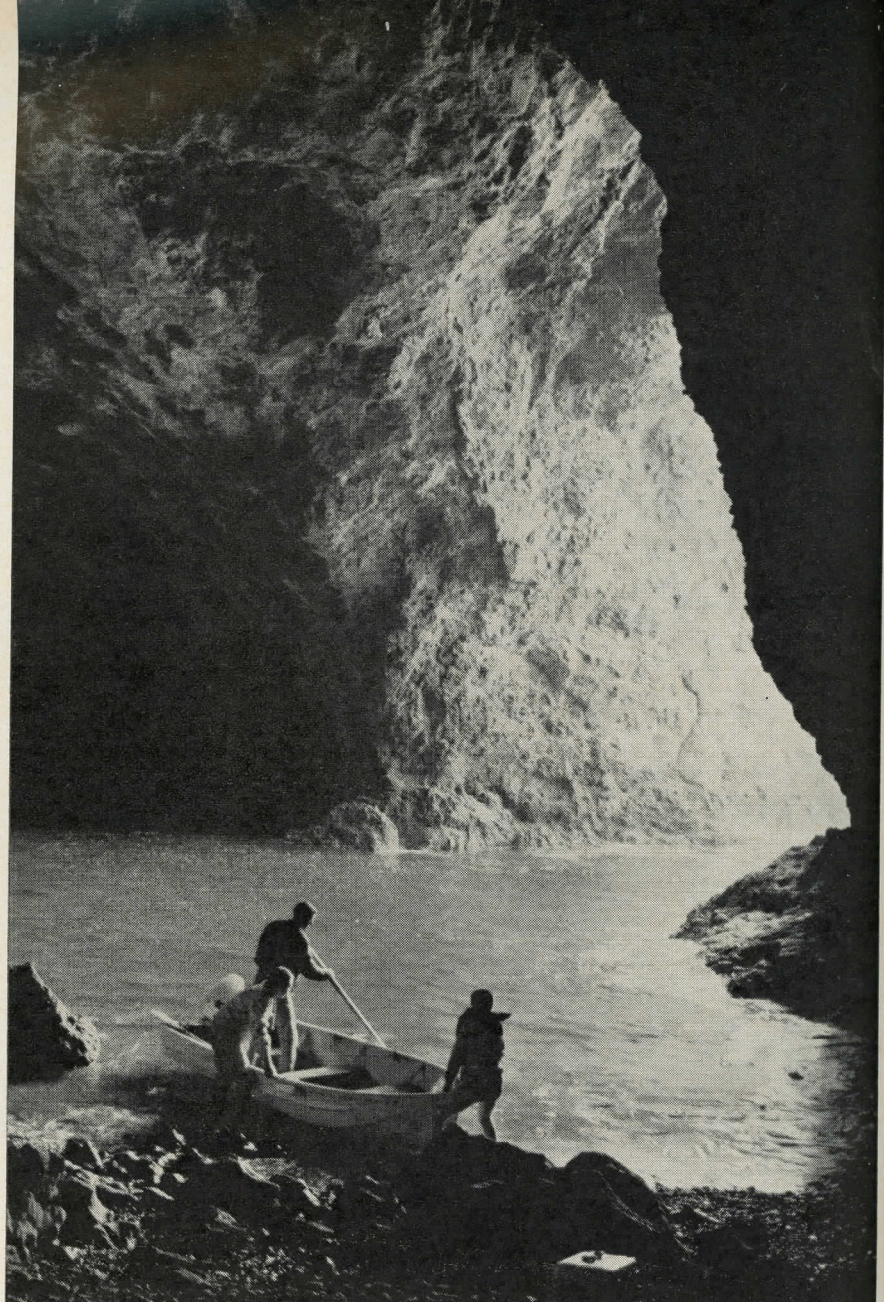
This is Frenchy's Cove, site of a temporary park ranger station manned from the last weekend in June to the week after Labor Day. A few level spots afford space for Spartan camping; there is no fresh water, and firewood depends on the driftwood supply. You can swim, look into a small cave, climb a precipitous path to the razor-edge spine of the island, cross to walk along the south shore beach for distances that depend on the tide, and, at low tide, explore some superlative tide pools. With a small boat, you can land inside the cave pictured on the next page.

Sailing east along the north shore, you can see Anacapa's only grove of trees—blue gum eucalyptus, their upper branches

Through the arches and into the sea caves



Skiff threads through cave, arch to cove
on northwest point of east Anacapa island



RALPH POOLE

Just west of landing called Frenchy's Cove on west Anacapa island, you can land
inside this vast cave. Indians are said to have collected water dripping from ceiling



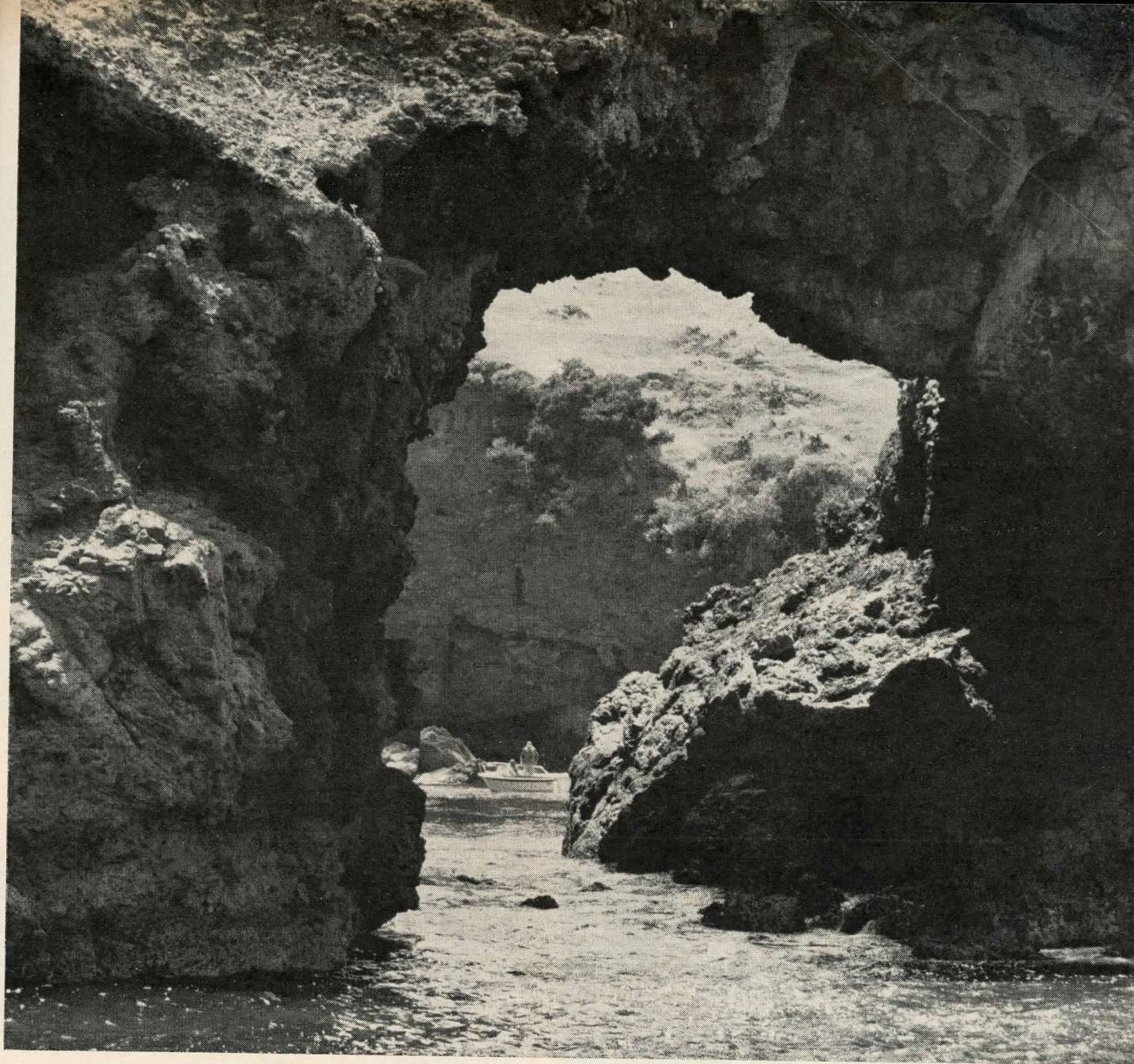
stripped bare by the wind—high in a draw on the western third of the middle island. If you trace the draw down to the shore, you will see a tiny inlet in the rock where a skilled boatman can put people ashore. From the inlet's left side, a path leads uphill past a concrete cistern and through the eucalyptus grove (site of a vanished shepherd's camp), and on up to the gently rolling plateau atop the island. These meadows are green with wild barley after a rain, and yellow with giant coreopsis, coming back after overgrazing some years ago.

The east island has few landings—but it does have a spectacular cave, navigable by dinghy in calm water, through its northwesterly point. The cave has a small entrance on the west side, an underwater window that casts an eerie, aqueous light in one of its rooms, and a dramatic double arch entrance on the east side; from this opening you can go on through another arch to a secluded cobblestone-beach cove.

On the east end, at the Coast Guard landing for the light

Left. Summer ranger briefs charter boat group, ashore for day
on cobblestone beach at Frenchy's Cove, Anacapa north coast

SUNSET



Santa Cruz north coast is progression of spectacular caves and arches alternating with coves that afford anchorage protected

from all but north, northeasterly winds. Small inlet, beyond arch, is short distance west of yachtmen's favorite Pelican Bay

GLENN CHRISTIANSEN

station (the light soon will be automatic and untended), hoists and stairs scale an astonishing cliff; the public is clearly not encouraged to drop in. Abreast of Arch Rock, tricky tidal currents also deter skippers from venturing close.

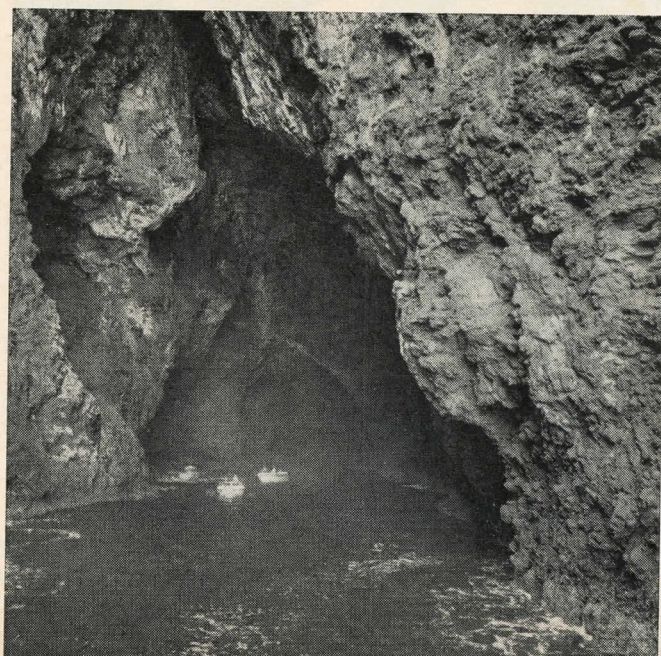
The south coast cliffs look steeper, rawer, more recently eroded. Here where it is sunnier you will see the most sea lions, dozing in groups in little coves or frolicking in the water.

The sinuous island chain seems to have no fixed identity as you pass its changing contours, until it assumes the shape of a great ship as you look back across Anacapa Passage from close to Santa Cruz.

Santa Cruz

Largest island offshore of California, Santa Cruz is the most amiable of the islands, with the most varied coastline, the biggest caves, the pleasantest harbors, the most vegetation,

Right. Greatest grotto is Painted Cave, near west end of Santa Cruz. Skiffs go quarter-mile in to interior room (take lights)



Santa Cruz is the most amiable, Santa Rosa and San Miguel are windy



Santa Cruz. Yachts congregate at Pelican Bay. Outboards, foreground, specially fitted for sea, went with larger "mother ship"

the most reliable streams. One of its two mountain ranges rises to the highest peak (2,434 feet) in the islands. It is the only place in the world where the Santa Cruz pine (*Pinus remorata*) occurs.

The names of its anchorages suggest some of its background: Prisoners Harbor (the island was once a Mexican penal colony), Smugglers Cove, Coches Prietos ("black pigs," for the Mexican-introduced animals, now wild), Pelican Bay. Nearly a hundred years ago it passed into the hands of Justinian Caire, who during his 68-year tenure made it into a Mediterranean-style agricultural retreat with vineyards and an olive grove. Today, the island is mainly cattle ranch (the eastern seventh is sheep ranch). This nearly pure remnant of old California has been sheltered so far by isolation from the urban sprawl of the mainland coast, but subdivision plans have been announced for the eastern tip of the island.

Fire and vandalism caused the owners to require visitors to secure written permission to land. For the main part of the island, write Santa Cruz Island Company, Suite 1400, 615 S. Flower St., Los Angeles 90017; fee is \$5 for 30-day permit, \$20 for a year. For the eastern end, write either Mr. Pier Gherini, 230 La Arcada Bldg., Santa Barbara 93104, or Mr. Francis Gherini, 162 S. "A" St., Oxnard, Calif. 93030; no fee is charged.

Santa Rosa

On to the west, Santa Rosa, second largest of the offshore islands, is windier and less hospitable to mariners than Santa Cruz, especially toward its western part. It is notable for such treasures as the oldest evidence of man in North America, for its rich relics of more recent Indians (five separate cultures, ending with the Chumash who made the islands populous), and for its stands of Torrey pine, which occurs elsewhere only at Torrey Mesa in San Diego. It is home to native Channel Island fox and skunk. From offshore you can sometimes spot imported Tule elk and deer—which have shown a tendency to diminish in size in the island environment. The great elephant seal stops on its beaches, and in its abundant offshore kelp beds rare sea otters have been sighted.

Santa Rosa is also a cattle ranch. With advance permission you may land, but only at Bechers Bay and in the daytime. Write Vail & Vickers, 123 W. Padre St., Santa Barbara 93105; no fee is charged.

San Miguel

Wild San Miguel, bleak, wind-battered, and least accessible, is to many the most fascinating of the islands.

Indian kitchen middens suggest that this island may have been one of the most densely populated areas in North America when it was lush with green vegetation before the white man came. Cabrillo landed here 50 years after Columbus discovered America; he later died here and is thought to have been buried on the island. Its physical record runs from fossil elephant bones to the ruined house of a sheep rancher who lived here from 1920 until World War II. After two decades, vegetation is once again beginning to take hold, arresting the destruction of wind-blown sand that resulted from sheep grazing.

But it is as a wildlife habitat that San Miguel is most remarkable, for here cold-water species from north of Point Conception mingle with southerly warm-water species: great colonies of nesting sea birds; one of the largest remaining rookeries of the ponderous elephant seal, an endangered species; northern and southern species of sea lion; the rare fur seal, until recently thought to be extinct; and others. Its subtidal zone contains one of the few areas of pristine underwater ecology left on the coast.

The island has survived an oil-drilling proposal, but at present you may see it only from offshore; as part of the Pacific Missile Range target area it is closed to visitors.



Santa Rosa is less mountainous, gentler of contour than Santa Cruz. Visitors may land only here at the ranch port: Bechers Bay

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How to get there by boat

You can get to know these four islands in several ways.

The most rewarding experience, of course, is available to the owner of a seagoing vessel and his guests. Outboards do visit the islands, but at great risk owing to distance and the unpredictability of sea and weather. Mariners should have the *Coast Pilot*, published by the Navy Hydrographic Office, and navigational charts (Coast and Geodetic Survey charts 5114, 5115, and 5116). Also useful is the 1967 *Boating and Fishing Almanac* (\$3.50 by mail from Box 344, Venice, Calif. 90291).

The sightseeing charter ship pictured at left and fishing party boats out of Santa Barbara, Ventura Marina, Channel Islands Harbor (Oxnard), and Port Hueneme regularly visit the islands. Most of the fishing vessels will also take sightseeing parties around Anacapa or along the coast of Santa Cruz on day trips; some will make farther overnight trips. To engage one economically, you must assemble a group large enough (say 12 to 30 persons) to bring the per-person rate down to \$10 or \$15 per day. If you want to land on Anacapa, make sure a small boat will be available. For a list of charter boat operators, write Southwest Editor, *Sunset Magazine*, 1541 Wilshire Blvd., Los Angeles 90017, and enclose a stamped return envelope. Often operators of marinas can also direct you to private boats available for trips.

For many people, the easiest way to visit the islands will be on a Sierra Club boating party out of Santa Barbara. These land on Anacapa and circle other islands during the wildflower season. For data, write Frederick Eissler, 2812 Panorama Pl., Santa Barbara 93105.

Swift of Ipswich, Baltimore clipper topsail schooner with diesel engine, sails charters out of Santa Barbara for day or overnight